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# Seeing the light, Part I: Aratus's interpretation of Homer's LEUKĒ acrostic<sup>1</sup>

Leah Kronenberg

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- <sup>1</sup> Aratus's LEPTĒ acrostic (*Phaen.* 783-87) has received much critical attention since it was first discovered by a modern scholar in 1960 (Jean-Marie Jacques).<sup>2</sup> While scholars frequently note that Aratus's acrostic was likely inspired by Homer's LEUKĒ acrostic (*Il.* 24.1-5), they have given less attention to considering why Aratus based this particular acrostic on Homer's.<sup>3</sup> Presumably this lack of attention to Aratus's use of his source is due to the fact that scholars generally dismiss Homer's acrostic as an accidental one and assume there is no deeper meaning in it.<sup>4</sup> Yet, even if Homer's acrostic was accidental, as is likely given the role oral poetry played in the *Iliad*'s composition, ancient readers could still have constructed deeper meaning in the acrostic. Indeed, there is evidence that ancient readers were quite interested in decoding riddles and finding hidden meaning in Homer's text, including in his acrostics.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I will argue that Aratus did read deeper meaning into the LEUKĒ acrostic and connected it contextually to the beginning of Book 24 of the *Iliad*. Specifically, I will argue that he connected LEUKĒ to the light of dawn, which appears shortly after the acrostic in *Iliad* 24.12-13, and that he responds by replacing Homer's white daylight acrostic with his own slender moonlight acrostic.

## THE LEUKĒ ACROSTIC, THE ISLAND OF LEUKĒ, AND LEUCADIAN APOLLO

- <sup>2</sup> Before I present my theory for how Aratus may have interpreted the Homeric acrostic, I will first summarize another theory that modern scholars (and an ancient poet) have proposed for making sense of the Homeric acrostic. Both Gregor Damschen and Martin Korenjak have suggested that the Homeric acrostic alludes to the Island of Leukē, where, according to the *Aethiopis*, the immortal part of Achilles resides, and where

Achilles was worshipped into the Roman imperial era.<sup>6</sup> While Damschen allows the possibility that Homer himself was making this allusion through his acrostic, Korenjak focuses instead on how Dionysius Periegetes, the (likely) Hadrianic-era author of a hexameter poem on the geography of the world, interpreted the *LEUKĒ* acrostic. Building on the work of Patrick Counillon and Yumna Khan, Korenjak persuasively demonstrates that Dionysius responds to Aratus's *LEPTĒ* acrostic and Homer's *LEUKĒ* acrostic with his own acrostic, *STENĒ* ("narrow strip of land," Dionys. Per. 307-11).<sup>7</sup> Dionysius's acrostic occurs amid a discussion of the "racecourse of Achilles" (Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος), a strip of land that in turn was frequently conflated with the island of Leukē.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in Korenjak's view, Dionysius redeems Homer's acrostic from the charge of being accidental and invests it with meaning by suggesting that it looks forward to Achilles' eventual reunion with Patroclus on Leukē. Dionysius's acrostic, then, represents an ingenious double reference to Homer's and Aratus's acrostics, similar to a "window allusion," and also attempts to make contextual sense of Homer's acrostic.<sup>9</sup> Dionysius's acrostic does not, however, indicate any attempt to make sense of why Aratus chose Homer's acrostic for his model.

- 3 Apollonius of Rhodes is another poet who makes an ingenious double reference to Aratus's and Homer's acrostics but again without providing any insight into why Aratus chose the Homeric acrostic as a model (at least, not in the passage I discuss below).<sup>10</sup> Selina Stewart 2010 persuasively argues that Apollonius of Rhodes' *AKTIA* acrostic in *Argonautica* 1.415-19, along with some surrounding words alluding to Aratus, such as σημαίνειν (Ap. Rhod. 1.414), activates allusions to both Aratus's *LEPTĒ* acrostic and to Homer's *LEUKĒ* acrostic by referencing the conflation of Actian Apollo and Leucadian Apollo.<sup>11</sup> Stewart does not propose that in doing so, Apollonius is making contextual sense of Homer's acrostic in the way that Dionysius Periegetes did, though in Part II of this article, I will show that in several other places, Apollonius pays detailed tribute to Aratus's interpretation of Homer's acrostic as relating not to Leucadian Apollo, but to the white light of dawn.

## THE WHITE LIGHT OF DAWN AND THE SLENDER LIGHT OF THE MOON

- 4 I would now like to turn to the evidence for my theory that Aratus connected the *LEUKĒ* acrostic with the appearance of dawn at the beginning of *Iliad* 24, as well as with the other appearances of "white light" in Homer. First, in Greek, λευκός frequently describes light. In particular, Homer associates the adjective once with the sun in the *Iliad* (λευκὸν δ' ἦν ἥλιος ὥς, "it was white, like the sun," 14.185) and once with the moon, when the round, white spot on a bay horse's forehead is compared to the moon (λευκὸν σῆμα τέτυκτο περίτροχον ἥτε μῆνη, "there was a **white mark**, round like the **moon**," *Il.* 23.455)<sup>12</sup>—a description that contains the key Aratean word σῆμα.<sup>13</sup> Homer also once describes the gleam of Olympus as white (λευκῇ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη, "a **white gleam** spread over," Hom. *Od.* 6.45). Euripides describes the dawn as making the light white (λευκαίνει / τόδε φῶς ἤδη λάμπουσ' ἠώς, "now the shining **dawn makes the light appear white**," Eur. *IA* 157-58), and twice describes the light of dawn with the adjective λευκός ("Ἐως γὰρ λευκὸν ὄμμα' ἀναίρεται – "For **Dawn** raises her **white** face,"

Eur. *El.* 102 ; λευκόν τε πρόσωπον ἄ-/οῦς, “and the **white** face of **Dawn**,” Eur. *El.* 730-31).<sup>14</sup>

- 5 Aratus may also have been aware of an etymological derivation, recorded in Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.17.37-39), of λύκη (*prima lux* or “first morning light”) from λευκός—though Macrobius notes that λύκη survives only in compound adjectives such as ἄμφιλύκη (“half light, morning twilight”), which appears once in Homer (*Il.* 7.433).<sup>15</sup> Notably, Aratus also uses ἄμφιλύκη once, shortly before the *LEPTĒ* acrostic (*Phaen.* 747).<sup>16</sup> I would add that the type of light conveyed by ἄμφιλύκη is by nature “slight” since the sun has not yet risen<sup>17</sup> and so, as the first phase of a greater light to come, is parallel to the crescent moonlight described in the *LEPTĒ* acrostic. The early morning twilight (ἄμφιλύκη), then, provides a bridge between the *LEUKĒ* (white morning light) and *LEPTĒ* (slender moonlight) acrostics.
- 6 Keeping in mind these connections between light, especially early morning light, and λευκός, I would now like to look at the beginning of *Iliad* Book 24 and consider how a poet like Aratus, intrigued by wordplay and Homeric *arcana*, may have interpreted the acrostic (*Il.* 24.1-13) :

Λῦτο δ' ἄγων, λαοὶ δὲ θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας ἕκαστοι  
 ἔσκιδναντ' ἰέναι. τοὶ μὲν δόρποιο μέδοντο  
 ὕπνου τε γλυκεροῦ ταρπήμεναι· αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς  
 κλαῖε φίλου ἑτάρου μεμνημένος, οὐδέ μιν ὕπνος  
 ἦρει πανδαμάτωρ, ἀλλ' ἐστρέφετ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα 5  
 Πατρόκλου ποθέων ἀνδροτῆτά τε καὶ μένος ἦϋ,  
 ἦδ' ὅποσα τολύπευσε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ πάθεν ἄλγεα  
 ἀνδρῶν τε πτολέμους ἀλεγείνα τε κύματα πείρων·  
 τῶν μιμνησκόμενος θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβεν,  
 ἄλλοτ' ἐπὶ πλευρᾷς κατακείμενος, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε 10  
 ὕπτιος, ἄλλοτε δὲ πρηνής· τότε δ' ὀρθὸς ἀναστὰς  
 δινεύεσκ' ἀλύων παρὰ θῆν' ἀλός οὐδέ μιν ἤως  
 φαινομένη λήθεσκεν ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα τ' ἠϊόνας τε.

Then the assembly dispersed, and the people scattered, each to go to their swift ships. The others concerned themselves with enjoying dinner and sweet sleep, but Achilles mourned remembering his dear friend, nor did all-conquering sleep seize him, but he tossed here and there, desiring the manhood and noble strength of Patroclus, and, remembering how many things he accomplished with him and how many pains he suffered, passing through the wars of men and the grievous waves, he shed thick tears, lying now on his side, now on his back, and now on his face ; then, standing upright, he would roam about, restless, along the shore of the sea. Nor did the appearance of dawn escape his notice above the sea and shores.

- 7 The chronological backdrop for this scene is the passage of time from night to dawn, and thus a word connected to early morning light, such as λευκός, is contextually appropriate. The verbs describing the “appearance” (φαινομένη) of dawn and its effect on Achilles (λήθεσκεν, “it did not escape his notice”) are similar to the signposting verbs used by later authors in intentional acrostic passages, which frequently contain words of “seeing” or “perceiving” to direct the reader to “see” the acrostic.<sup>18</sup> Modern scholars interested in acrostics-hunting have generally considered signposting words critical criteria for aiding in the differentiation between accidental and intentional acrostics. For example, Cristiano Castelletti’s (2014 : 49) useful list of “objective criteria” include “a) the relation between the acrostics and the context of the passage

in which they appear ; b) various signposting techniques devised by the author ; and c) intertextual references that embed the acrostics within the literary tradition.”<sup>19</sup>

- 8 Since ancient authors were also ancient readers, they presumably utilized similar criteria in their analysis of acrostics in other poets. I have already indicated ways in which Aratus might have interpreted the first two criteria as being met by Homer's acrostic. The last criterion will play a large role in Part II of this study, when I consider the reception of Aratus' interpretation of Homer's acrostic ; it is less relevant to Aratus' interpretation of Homer's acrostic, since Aratus himself seems to be either near or at the beginning of the tradition of intertextual acrostic references, and certainly “Homer” has no prior acrostics tradition to which to allude. That said, there are still clever intertextual clues in Aratus' text that point to passages in Homer that help to make sense of Aratus's interpretation of Homer's acrostic and seem to “read” Homer as a clever encoder of hidden messages in his text. For instance, Aratus might have drawn a connection between φαينوμένη in *Iliad* 24.13 and the name of his work, the *Phaenomena*.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, Aratus links this verb with dawn (φανήμεναι ἥῳ, *Phaen.* 866) in a line that leads into another acrostic in *Phaenomena* 867-70, namely FAMA (“speech, fame, prophetic saying”).<sup>21</sup> In addition, since the phrase φανήμεναι ἥῳ contains the only use of this infinitive in Aratus, Christophe Cusset argues that Aratus intends an allusion to Homer's use of this infinitive with dawn in *Il.* 9.240 : ἄρ᾽ αἶται δὲ τάχιστα φανήμεναι Ἡῶ δι' ἄν (“He [Hector] **prays** that **dawn appear** as quickly as possible”).<sup>22</sup> Finally, Cusset argues that Aratus could see a play on his name at the start of this Homeric line.<sup>23</sup> Aratus might be signaling, then, that he sees an importance in the appearance of dawn in these Homeric passages, as well as a fundamental connection to his poetic work. Aratus may have additionally drawn a connection between his work and the early light of dawn that signals to Achilles that it is time to reunite symbolically with Patroclus by dragging Hector around Patroclus's σῆμα (“tomb,” but also Aratus's “sign” or “constellation”). After all, the signs provided by the light of the sun and the moon are precisely the subject of the first part of the *Phaenomena*'s section on weather signs (778-891).

- 9 Aratus responds to the Homeric acrostic not with the bright, white light of the dawn or the sun, but by replacing it with the slender light of the moon (*Phaen.* 783-87) :

Λεπτὴ μὲν καθαρὴ τε περὶ τρίτον ἡμαρ εὐοῦσα  
εὐδιός κ' εἶη, λεπτὴ δὲ καὶ εὖ μάλ' ἐρευθῆς  
πνευματὶ παχίων δὲ καὶ ἀμβλείῃσι κεραίαις  
τέτρατον ἐκ τριτάτοιο φόως ἀμενηνὸν ἔχουσα  
ἢ νότῳ ἀμβλυνταὶ ἢ ὕδατος ἐγγὺς ἐόντος.<sup>24</sup>

If around the third day she [the moon] is **slender** and **clear**, it will be good weather ; if **slender** and quite **red**, it will be windy ; if thick, with dulled horns, and she has feeble light on the third and fourth nights, she is blunted by the south wind or because rain is near.

- 10 While the *LEPTĒ* acrostic focuses on the slender shape of the moon, Aratus's passage also underscores the different colors of the moon, sometimes clear (καθαρή, 783), and sometimes red (ἐρευθής, 784). These colors could remind the attentive reader of Homer's bay horse, which had the white, moon-like spot (λευκὸν σῆμα, *Il.* 23.455) or “sign, heavenly body” on his forehead but which “was **red** everywhere else” (ὃς τὸ μὲν ἄλλο τόσον **φοῖνιξ** ἦν, *Il.* 23.454).<sup>25</sup> The light of dawn is also parallel to that of the moon in having both a clear/white phase and a red phase.<sup>26</sup>

## ΑΙΓΛΗ, THE HESPERIDES, AND POPLAR TREES

- 11 Another piece of evidence that Aratus viewed some form of “light” as the crucial bridge between the *LEUKĒ* acrostic and the *LEPTĒ* acrostic might be found in Aratus’ transformation of Homer’s “white gleam” of Olympus (λευκῇ δ’ ἐπιδέδρομεν αἶγλη, Hom. *Od.* 6.45) into a “slender gleam” of the hands of the constellation Serpent-holder (λεπτῇ...ἐπιδέδρομεν αἶγλη, *Phaen.* 80).<sup>27</sup> Aratus makes sure the reader notes the parallel by precisely repeating the phrase ἐπιδέδρομεν αἶγλη (“a gleam spread over”). He also makes sure the reader draws a connection between this line and the *LEPTĒ* acrostic passage by using λεπτῇ as the first word of a line only in lines 80 and 783 (the beginning of the acrostic passage).<sup>28</sup> Finally, Aratus repeats the word αἶγλη in the crucial lines leading up to his acrostic, the lines which give signposts for the reader to notice his acrostic (778-79):

σκέπτεο δὲ πρῶτον κεράων ἐκάτερθε σελήνην.

ἄλλοτε γάρ τ’ ἄλλη μιν ἐπιγράφει ἔσπερος αἶγλη.

Look first at the moon on each side of her horns. One evening inscribes her with one **gleam**, another with another.

- 12 Thus, Aratus instructs his reader to consider carefully the different kinds of light (αἶγλη) the moon can have, perhaps also hinting that light (αἶγλη) can be λευκός.
- 13 Aratus’s use of the word αἶγλη may also lead in a more mythological direction: the collocation of the words ἔσπερος αἶγλη (779), along with ἐρευθής (“red”), which is in parallel line-ending position in 784, brings to mind the Hesperides. While their exact names vary, the names are usually a variation of these three words from Aratus. For example, in Apollonius of Rhodes, their names appear as Ἑσπέρη, Αἶγλη, and Ἑρυθής (*Argon.* 4.1427-28), and it is significant to note that Ἑσπέρη transforms into a black poplar tree.<sup>29</sup> Αἶγλη is also sometimes the name of one of the Heliades (e.g., Hyg. *Fab.* 154), all of whom turn into black poplar trees. Perhaps Aratus’s focus on αἶγλη as a bridge between Homer’s acrostic and his own is partly a result of the mythological connection of Αἶγλη to the poplar tree, another possible meaning of the *LEUKĒ* acrostic.
- 14 Even on this interpretation of the acrostic, light continues to play an important role, however, since the mythological Αἶγλη, whether she is one of the Hesperides or the Heliades, is connected to light: the Hesperides are associated with the evening and evening-star, and the Heliades with the sun.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in mythology, these two Aegles nicely parallel the day and night associations (respectively) of the acrostics in Homer and Aratus. The white poplar itself also has solar associations: Isidore of Seville notes that the white poplar’s leaf is actually *bicolor* (white and green), and that as such it has “as it were, the marks of night and day, which correspond to the times of the rising and the setting of the sun” (*quasi noctis et diei notas, quae tempora ortu solis occasuque constant*, *Etym.* 17.7.45).

## ΛΕΥΚΟΣ, ΛΕΠΤΟΣ, AND AESTHETICS

- 15 Aratus’s decision to replace a color term such as λευκός with a literary critical term such as λεπτός potentially has Homeric inspiration, as well: both of these terms were used by Homer in an aesthetic sense to describe the beautiful clothing of gods and goddesses. The “white sun” simile (λευκὸν δ’ ἦν ἥελιος ὥς) is used to describe Hera’s

veil, as she dresses herself in preparation to seduce Zeus (*Il.* 14.185). The dressing scenes of Calypso and Circe in the *Odyssey*, which, incidentally, both take place at dawn (*Od.* 5.228, 10.541), include descriptions of their robes as both “white” (ἄργυρεον) and “fine and elegant” (λεπτὸν καὶ χαρίεν) (*Od.* 5.230-31, 10.543-44).<sup>31</sup> Finally, when Apollo is born, he is wrapped in a garment that is “white” and “fine” (λευκῷ, / λεπτῷ, *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 121-22). Thus, in transforming LEUKĒ to LEPTĒ, Aratus may simply be intensifying an aesthetic resonance that had already been present in Homer’s acrostic, since “white” in Homer is not only a neutral color term but can describe finely wrought, artistic objects such as a goddess’s clothing.

- 16 Aratus uses his LEPTĒ acrostic and its relationship to Homer’s LEUKĒ acrostic to construct Homer’s poetry as a spiritual forebear of his own, poetry that focuses on aesthetics and hidden messages. The LEUKĒ acrostic, then, is not just a symbol of the dawn in Book 24, which signals the coming of the sun, but is a symbol of the “sun of poets,” Homer himself.<sup>32</sup> Aratus’s moon acrostic is also, however, a statement of difference: if Homer’s acrostic associates him with the clear light of dawn, then Aratus’s associates himself with the subtle light of the crescent moon—a statement that well captures his refined poetics. After all, in Aratus’s poem, things are not just clearly revealed, like the light of day; they are also cleverly hidden and difficult to see, like the slender light of the moon, and his LEPTĒ acrostic.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Aratus’ acrostic pays tribute to Homer’s poetry and also stakes a claim for Aratus as an epic poet who is even *more* fine and subtle than Homer.

## CONCLUSION

- 17 The importance of Aratus’s LEPTĒ acrostic as a symbolic statement of his poetics is accepted by most critics. These same critics, however, have not created any plausible explanation for why Aratus would base his LEPTĒ acrostic on Homer’s LEUKĒ acrostic, a seemingly random confluence of letters at the beginning of *Iliad* 24, and have generally been content to leave that question unexamined. In this article, I have not tried to prove that “Homer” really intended his LEUKĒ acrostic to connote the white poplar tree, or the white light of dawn, which brings an end to Achilles’ sleepless night in Book 24, and which looks back to the white light of the sun and the moon in *Iliad* 14 and 23, or the white gleam of Olympus in *Odyssey* 6. What I have tried to show is that Aratus, an author with a deep knowledge of Homer and Homeric scholarship, may have interpreted him, whether earnestly or playfully, as doing just that. Thus, Aratus initiates a tradition of finding meaning in acrostics and alluding to them in his own work. He illustrates all the fabulous ingenuity that can underlie the attempts to solve these acrostics puzzles, as well as, ultimately, the uncertainty involved in constructing meaning out of them. After all, Homer’s LEUKĒ acrostic was most likely an accidental confluence of letters despite all of the clever indications otherwise.

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## NOTES

1. I would like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their many excellent suggestions for improvement. I am also grateful to Julia Hejduk for her helpful comments, and to her and Matthew Robinson and for sharing their forthcoming and in-progress acrostics studies with me.
2. For an up-to-date bibliography on Aratus's *LEPTĒ* acrostic (as well as more acrostics in Aratus and other authors), see Hanses 2014: 609n2, to which could be added Tsantsanoglou 2009; Danielewicz 2015; Katz 2016; Robinson 2019a; Robinson 2019b. While Jacques 1960 was the first modern scholar to discover the acrostic, ancient readers noticed it much sooner, as epigrams from contemporary poets such as Callimachus (*Epigr.* 27 Pf.), Leonidas of Tarentum (*Anth. Pal.* 9.25), and Ptolemy (*Suppl. Hell.* 712) seem to indicate by prominently using λεπτός or a related word to pay tribute to Aratus. On the likely appreciation of the acrostic by these poets, see Jacques 1960: 58-59; Bing 1990: 282; Haslam 1992: 199; Bing 1993: 104; Katz 2008: 109-10; Luz 2010: 50; Volk 2010/2014: 206; Henkel 2011: 180; Volk 2012: 230; Klooster 2013: 351; Hanses 2014: 609; Danielewicz 2015: 388n2. On the question of Ptolemy's identity, see Tsantsanoglou 2009: 61-62. Note: in order to make the bilingual puns and allusions between Greek and Latin acrostics easier to see, I have chosen to transliterate Greek acrostics.

3. Jacques 1960: 51 is also the first to suggest the connection between Homer's *LEUKĒ* acrostic and Aratus's *LEPTĒ* acrostic.
4. E.g., Somerville 2010: 202; Hilton 2013: 89.
5. See Jacques 1960: 48-50; Levitan 1979: 57; Hilton 2013 (who quotes ancient evidence of interest in Homeric acrostics, as well as ancient skepticism about them, such as in Gell. NA 14.6.4-5); Robinson 2019a. Eustathius, in his twelfth-century commentary on the *Iliad* (1335.28-32), deems the *LEUKĒ* acrostic an accidental one and finds no deeper meaning in it, but he does not represent all ancient readers of Homer. On Eustathius's discussion of the acrostic, which preserves material from Athenaeus, see Damschen 2004: 105; Korenjak 2009: 393; Hilton 2013: 88-89. Eustathius limits the possible meanings of *LEUKĒ* to either leprosy (λεύκη) or the white poplar tree (λεύκη) and so dismisses any connection to the beginning of *Iliad* 24.
6. See Damschen 2004: 104-5; Korenjak 2009. On the relationship of Achilles and the Island of Leukē, see also Burgess 2001: 163-66.
7. Korenjak 2009. Counillon 1981 first discovered the *STENĒ* acrostic and related it to the acrostics in Aratus and Homer; Khan 2004 develops further connections between Dionysius' acrostic and Aratus's *LEPTĒ* and nicely points out the stylistic, Callimachean associations of στενή ("narrow"). See also Luz 2010: 54-56; Lightfoot 2014: 329; Downie 2017: 172-76.
8. On the conflation or confusion between Leukē and the *dromos* of Achilles, see Burgess 2001: 165.
9. For the term "window allusion" or "window reference," see Thomas 1986: 188-90. Downie 2017: 173 dubs Dionysius's acrostic a "window-acrostic." For a recent investigation of the overlap in interpretive issues pertaining to the study of allusion and acrostics, as well as some persuasive examples of "acrostic intertextuality," see Robinson 2019a and 2019b.
10. While the exact dates of the *Phaenomena* and *Argonautica* are unknown, most scholars are comfortable treating the *Argonautica* as later than the *Phaenomena*, which is usually dated to the mid 270s B.C.E. based on the evidence from the ancient *Vitae*, and as the alluding text in passages with a clear intertextual relationship. For a discussion of the usual dating of the *Argonautica* to the period 270-240 B.C.E., and an argument based on astronomy for dating it to 238 B.C.E., see Murray 2014. For allusions to Aratus in the *Argonautica*, see Kidd 1997: 38-39.
11. On the conflation between Actian Apollo and Leucadian Apollo, see Miller 2009: 59 and Butrica 2001, who takes a more extreme position of arguing that Actian (meaning "of the shore") was simply another name for Leucadian Apollo.
12. Albis 2001: 28 argues that the point of the comparison between the moon and the marking is the white color and not the circular shape, though I think both could contribute to the comparison. Note: all translations are my own.
13. See Volk 2010/2014: 201; Stewart 2010: 402; Castelletti 2012: 87-88. Levitan 1979: 57-58 proposes that *Phaen.* 808-12 contains an almost-acrostic that underscores the importance of signs in Aratus, namely *SEMEIĒ*, picking up on σημαίνει at the beginning of 808.
14. Dawn, the morning star, and early morning light are also frequently "white" in the Latin tradition, some examples of which may be directly influenced by Aratus's use of the *LEUKĒ* acrostic, as I will argue in Part II of this article. E.g., Enn. *Ann.* 571 Sk.; Matius fr. 9 Courtney; Catull. 63.40; Verg. *Aen.* 4.586-87; Tib. 1.3.93-94; Ov. *Met.* 15.189-90; Luc. 2.719-21; Stat. *Theb.* 2.333-34; Val. Fl. *Argon.* 3.257-58; Val. Fl. *Argon.* 7.22; Apul. *Met.* 7.1. I would add that "alba" means "dawn" in both Italian and Spanish.
15. Even if Macrobius is the first to mention this etymology, he is no doubt deriving it from an earlier source. Hunter 1986: 55 considers the possibility that Macrobius derives the etymology from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. grammarian Apollodorus of Athens but acknowledges we do not have confirmation; of course, the source could be even older. Cf. also Paul. Fest. 121: *lycophos Graeci dicunt, quod nos primum tempus lucis; dictum autem lycophos, quasi λευκὸν φῶς, id est lumen*

*candidum* (“The Greeks call *lycophos* what we call the first period of light; moreover, it is called *lycophos* as if *λευκὸν φῶς*, that is shining, white light”).

16. Commentators generally agree that Aratus took note of Homeric hapaxes. E.g., Kidd 1997: 164, *ad Phaen.* 2 on Aratus’ use of ἄρρητον.

17. As I will discuss in Part II, Apollonius of Rhodes describes ἀμφιλύκη as a λεπτὸν... / φέγγος (“slender light,” *Argon.* 2.670-71).

18. For examples of signposting words for Aratus’s *LEPTĒ* acrostic, see Hanses 2014; Danielewicz 2015; Robinson 2019a (with notes for further bibliography). For signposts in Virgil’s acrostic in *G.* 1.429-33, see Feeney and Nelis 2005; Somerville 2010. Homer’s reference to the “shore” (παρὰ θῖν’ ἄλός, *Il.* 24.12; ἡϊόνας, *Il.* 24.13) might also be interpreted as a clue to look at the “border” of the line, where the acrostic is located. The *AKTIA* (“of the shore”) acrostic discussed earlier may also be playing on “shore” and “border.” For Virgil’s use of *ora* (“border, shore”) as a signpost for an acrostic, see Adkin 2014: 47, 59n109. Perhaps even the phrase ὀρθὸς ἀναστὰς (“standing upright,” *Il.* 24.11) could be interpreted as a cue to read in a vertical direction.

19. See also Robinson 2019a for a discussion of procedures for distinguishing between intentional and accidental acrostics.

20. On the programmatic nature of the title of Aratus’s work, as related to the theme of sight, see Volk 2012: 216.

21. Cusset 2002: 192.

22. Cusset 2002: 192.

23. Cusset 2002: 192. On the possible etymological connection between Aratus’s name and ἄρᾱσθαι, see Katz 2008: 113n3. I will return to a discussion of *Il.* 9.240 in Part II.

24. I am using the text of Kidd 1997 for Aratus.

25. Aratus uses φοινίσσοιτο of the red moon in *Phaen.* 798 (cf. φοῖνιξ of Homer’s horse in *Il.* 23.454). I would also note that λευκός can, like καθαρός, mean “clear.” Aratus studiously avoids describing the moon’s light as λευκός—perhaps an intentional suppression designed to call attention to the source of his acrostic. Aratus uses λευκός twice in his poem (921 and 1063), though each time not of light but of plants (the thistle and the squill).

26. The color most associated with Dawn in Greek and Latin literature is red. Cf. Homer and Hesiod’s frequent epithet for Dawn, “rosy-fingered” (ῥοδοδάκτυλος). It might be relevant to note Sappho’s use of βροδοδάκτυλος (“rosy-fingered”) for the moon in fr. 96.8. Even if Hindley’s (2002) emendation (ἄγυροδάκτυλος, “silver-fingered”) of the transmitted text is accepted, the second half of the compound adjective still creates a link between moonlight and the light of dawn. On the various shades of red associated with dawn in the *Aeneid*, see Fratantuono 2013. If both white and red colors of dawn are described, then the white phase of morning light precedes the red phase. see Lucan 2.719-21. See also ps.-Lactantius on Stat. *Theb.* 2.333-34.

27. In Homer, αἴγλη can be used of the light of the sun and the moon, as well: ὥς τε γὰρ ἡελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἢ δὲ σελήνης (“there was a gleam like that of the sun or the moon,” *Od.* 4.45, 7.84).

28. There are some textual problems in line 80, but Kidd 1997: 208 argues for the codex reading (λεπτή).

29. I will discuss this episode further in Part II. In Plin. *HN* 37.38 the Hesperides are all associated with poplar trees and gathering amber from them.

30. In Hes. *Theog.* 215, the Hesperides are the daughters of Night and Erebus, but in Diod. Sic. 4.27.2, they are the daughters of Hesperis (daughter of Hesperus, himself the son of Eos; see Hyg. *Poet. Astr.* 2.42) and Atlas. The Heliades are the daughters of the sun.

31. While not described as “white,” Aphrodite’s robe in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* is described as “brighter than the gleam of fire” (φαινότερον πυρὸς ἀύγῃς, 86) and shining “like the moon” (ὥς δὲ σελήνῃ, 89).

32. Leonidas of Tarentum (*Anth. Pal.* 9.24) compares Homer to the fiery sun, which outshines other stars and the moon just as Homer outshines other poets. While Leonidas does not reference Homer's acrostic, he does depict Homer as holding the "brightest torch of the Muses" (λαμπρότατον Μουσῶν φέγγος, 9.24.4), and the word λαμπρός ("clear, bright") has some semantic overlap with λευκός.

33. Cf. Volk 2010/2014: 207-8.

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## ABSTRACTS

Part I of this two-part study argues that Aratus's decision to base his *LEPTĒ* acrostic, which occurs during a discussion of moonlight (*Phaen.* 783-87), on Homer's *LEUKĒ* acrostic (*Il.* 24.1-5) was motivated by the connection in Homer between the adjective λευκός and various types of light from the sky, including the light of dawn, which appears shortly after the acrostic (*Il.* 24.12), and the light of the moon (*Il.* 23.455). In Part II, I will argue that a study of the reception of Aratus's acrostic in Greek and Latin poetry reveals that many ancient poets solved the "riddle" of how Aratus's acrostic relates to Homer's.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Acrostics, wordplay, dawn, moon, Homer, Aratus